XIII. PROVERBS

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The Tanala, like all the Malagasy, have a great number of proverbs. No speech in council is complete without them and they are constantly quoted in bargaining and in disputes. When men are angry, they will go on for half an hour or more, quoting them and each capping the other's proverb with one favorable to his side of the argument. Cleverness in this seems to be greatly admired and by the time one or the other runs out, good humor has usually been restored. The following series gives only a small part of those in common use, but will serve to show their type.

1. *Fototr'antavy n'olombelo, n'iva iva, n'abo abo.* "Men are like the sacrifice posts in the rice fields, some are long and others short." Applied tolerantly to individual differences in opinion and behavior.

2. *Ladim-boatavo ny viavy izao tany izao amatsahany aby.* "Women are like the gourd vine, they bear children everywhere."

3. *Sikidin Ratrangitrangy dia my omaly koa.* "Whenever Ratrangitrangy casts his *sikidy* to find the condition of a patient it says 'His health is the same as yesterday.'" Applied to an equivocal answer.

4. *Sikidy tsara tsy andihiza, sikidy ratsy tsy amonoam-po.* "A favorable *sikidy* does not make him dance or an unfavorable one make him despair." Applied to one with a set purpose.

5. *Tsy misy zanak'ombiasy tsy ho voan'ny sa (vintana) ary: Tsy misy zanaka amapnefy tsy ho main'ny tsirim-by.* "One must not think that he will not die because he is the child of an *ombiasy* [medicine-man], or that he will not be burned because he is the child of a smith."

6. *Tamango'olo tsy mbo mamoha; fa ny tamangontena no mamoha.* "The *tamango* [a fetish] does not waken everyone. It wakens only its owner."

7. *Avy tsy nangeha naseziky ny raza.* "He arrives without invitation, as though sent by the ancestors."

8. *Atody mongongoy; ala mahafaty reny, apetraka mahafaty ray.* "It is like the eggs of the *mongongoy* [a large ground bird of very bad omen]. To take them is to kill one's mother, to leave them is to kill one's father." [787]

9. *Ramaka nandalo tana may.* "When Ramaka passes the whole village burns."

538 10. *Tandraka azon-drahalahy tsy hanin'aty.* "One does not eat the liver of a *tandraka* [hedgehog] which his brother has caught."

11. *Vadin-drahalahy tsy manara-mitavy.* "Your brother's wife does not follow you to the *tavy* [rice field]."

12. *Sindrany manana ny andro hoatry ny manan'ny hasoa.* "It is better to have a good destiny than to be handsome."

13. *Ny fanahy sambori-dava; tsy mamelik'olo tsy ny tompony.* "The spirits are like your loin-cloth; good or bad it still encircles you."

[325] 14. *Vorom-potsy tsy milavitr'aomby.* "White herons do not go far from the cattle." White herons are always to be seen about a cattle herd, catching the insects they frighten up from the grass.

15. *Ny fanahy ratsy hidin'ny hoavy, ary ny fanahy soa vava lozoky ny hamany.* "The wicked shut their doors to those who would enter, but an honest man's door is open to all the world," i.e., he has nothing to conceal.

16. *Veloma tsy mandara hoandry, ary sakafo tsy mandara vatsy.* "Saying 'Farewell' does not prevent one from sleeping in the village, nor does carrying food prevent one from taking a meal with a relative."

17. *Sindrany miarakandro aomby vato hoatra ny miambin'olo folo.* "Better to guard a hundred cattle than to watch ten men."

[278] 18. *Sakarivo natao ody vaza sady fanafody hanitragnitra.* "Like ginger used as a medicine for the teeth. It both does good and tastes good."

19. *Ny ahiahy tsy ihavana.* "With suspicion there is no friendship."

20. *Tatanam-by rabdrian-vy vy koa manatsara vy.* "The hammer and anvil; two friends who help each other."

21. *Havanan'dambo tsy ritra amboa raiky.* "One dog cannot put many wild boar to flight."

22. *Hazo tokana tsy mba ala.* "One tree does not make a forest."

23. *Tondro tokana tsy mahafoy hao.* "One finger cannot catch a louse."

24. *Kiboty miray miarakandro: ny maty iraisahoma, ny velo iraisa miarakandro.* "Be like orphans guarding cattle. If one dies they eat it in common and they all watch the survivors."

25. *Mpivady tsy mifamara ady no farany.* "Husband and wife are never through scolding each other."

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26. *Onamamy no iraisana, beroberoka no hisarahana.* "The sweet herbs are gathered into one place and the weeds thrown away." 538

27. *Ny atody tsy miady amim-bato.* "An egg cannot fight against a stone."

28. *Mpilano alohan'aomby, ka lanin ny voay.* "Swimming before the cattle, he will be snapped up by the crocodile."

29. *Varatra tsy indroy mamaky.* "Lightning does not strike twice in the same place."

30. *Somondrara tsy indroy misandratra.* "Nests are not renewed twice."

31. *Fenhin'amboan i Igara, sindrany maty fehy hoatry ny befy.* "The Igara tie a dog. They would rather let him die than have him escape."

32. *K'aza mizara mizaha fehirongo.* "In distributing [beef] one must not regard the hairdressing of the assistants."

33. *Si-pary lava ny fanahy; mamy laha tandohany paka ambodiny.* "An honest man is like a long sugar cane, sweet from head to foot."

34. *Haromay volo, mahay ny vary, mahy ny ro.* "Like a big bamboo spoon. It serves for rice and meat at the same time."

35. *Varangara tsihy, mora mivadika.* "A door of matting, easily turned back."

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XIV. A LEGEND

(From manuscript of Sadaro Antoine)

538 [The Tanala have a rather rich folklore and delight in telling and hearing stories. Many of these are historical, others are romantic or humorous. The long contact which the Malagasy have had with Europeans, Arabs and Africans is reflected in this lore, which contains motifs from the most diverse sources. Most of the non-historical stories I heard among the Tanala are known to most other tribes and as several good collections of Malagasy folklore have already been published it is unnecessary to give them here. The appended story is given as a fair sample.]

221 538 After the harvest of the hill rice, at the end of the month *Valasira* [April], the Tanala return to their villages which have been abandoned for six months while the people lived at the *tavy* [clearings]. From May to July, when the cultivation of beans begins, the Tanala stay in their villages and do no work. On good evenings the people have their meal in common in the public square of the village. After the meal, the children gather around the old people and these tell them stories and proverbs. This is one of the stories they tell:

539 Ramangavato had two wives, Pelakatratroka, who was head wife, and Pelakasoa. Pelakatratroka had a son, Rangorobemana. Pelakasoa had two sons, Andriamanikandro and Andriamanibola. When Rangorobemana grew up, he married two wives, Rasoatombozato and Toibolaharea. His brothers stole his wives and carried them away overseas. Rangorobemana was desperate and went sadly to the forest to make a *tavy* [burned clearing for rice]. He lit a great fire and the smoke rose even to *Zanahary*. The first year *Zanahary* said nothing. The second year he was angry and sent the *fody*, the small parrot, the crow and many other birds to put out the fire, but, because they were accustomed to live on the earth, they did not return. Finally *Zanahary* sent one called Rahino, with a heavy rain. "In putting out my fire you are making me die," said Rangorobemana to Rahino. "You would do well to kill me." "I have not the right to kill you," answered Rahino, and he returned to the sky to lay Rangorobemana's complaint before *Zanahary*.

"If he does not make another *tavy*," said *Zanahary*, "and if he takes another wife, he will have a son. Still, at the moment of the birth I advise him to plant a pointed bamboo stake in front of the mother. If he does not, the child will come out by her head."